

Re: origin of thoughts

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.bio.evolution/2005-10/msg00198.html>

- *From:* "Glen M. Sizemore" <gmsizemore2@xxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Fri, 7 Oct 2005 13:59:40 -0400 (EDT)
-

"Catherine Woodgold" <an588@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message
[news:di4cdh\\$9g\\$1@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:news:di4cdh$9g$1@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)

> "Glen M. Sizemore" (gmsizemore2@xxxxxxxxxx) writes:

>> Similarly, self-awareness requires exposure to discriminative
>> contingencies

>> that make aspects of our behavior (perceptual and otherwise) function as
>> discriminative stimuli. Non-human animals can be trained to "report" on
>> their behavior (subjective or otherwise) and drug discrimination is proof
>> of

>> this. Now, one may claim that the animals were always "conscious of their
>> own behavior" and were just trained to report that they were. The
>> alternative is, of course, that the contingencies that produce the
>> "reporting" are what "makes the animal aware."

>

> If an animal's brain is aware of what some other part of
> the animal is doing, that is not necessarily consciousness
> (by my definition at least).

OK. But what does that have to do with my post? BTW, "brains" can no more
"be conscious" than they can eat or have sex. That is a category error.
PEOPLE are conscious, make decisions, see, hear, etc.

>Even if one part of the
> brain is aware of what another part of the brain is doing,
> that doesn't satisfy the definition. A part of the
> brain has to be aware of what itself is doing (i.e.
> being aware of ... infinite loop).

This is all nonsense. What has to be done is the circumstances that give
rise to certain locutions have to be examined, and those circumstances
explained. One of the things that is said to "show" consciousness, in the
sense of self-awareness, is that people may report on their behavior both
public and private. People also talk about their own subjective experiences
as evidence of consciousness in the sense of self-awareness. These things
are what have to be explained, and they are, at the behavioral level. We don't
know what is going on physiologically, but we don't know that about

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virtually any kind of learned behavior – except maybe the habituation of the gill–withdrawal reflex in *Aplysia*.

>

- > I suspect that what humans experience as consciousness
- > doesn't quite fit my definition but is merely a close
- > facsimile thereof, like looking in pairs of mirrors and
- > seeing maybe 12 or so copies of reflection–within–a–reflection
- > before it fades away into vagueness, rather than actually
- > seeing an infinite progression. I think it is conceivable
- > to have the actual infinite progression and that this would
- > not require an infinite number of neurons -- just some
- > trick similar to what's used in Godel's theorem.

Guess what? Contrary to popular belief, you don't get to make up meanings for ordinary words. When one does that, one sees only the reflections of one's assumptions. What has to be done is the circumstances that give rise to certain locutions have to be examined, and those circumstances explained. The (generally multiple) "meanings" of terms are to be found in their usage.

• **References:**

◆ **Re: origin of thoughts**

◇ *From:* Catherine Woodgold

- Prev by Date: **Re: Article: Brain May Still Be Evolving, Studies Hint**
- Next by Date: **Re: Musings about the Cambrian Explosion**
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